

For Immediate Release



AUB confers honorary doctorates to Kadi, Masri and Shalala during the Commencement exercises for graduate students

Beirut, Lebanon- 22/06/2012 -The American University of Beirut awarded on June 22, 2012 honorary doctoral degrees to three individuals who made enduring contributions to academia, Arabic and Islamic literature, business and philanthropy.

The award ceremony, took place at 7.30 pm at the AUB Green Field, during the Commencement exercises for 493 graduate students, among whom were nine PhD candidates.

The three recipients were: Wadad A. Kadi, a preeminent scholar of Islamic thought and civilization, Munib R. Masri a leading international businessman and philanthropist; Donna E. Shalala, a dedicated public servant and top academic administrator.

The event started with the traditional procession of faculty members in their academic regalia, led by Chief Marshall Samir Makdisi who opened and closed the ceremony. AUB has been conferring honorary doctoral degrees since 1969, but the tradition was suspended for several years due to the 1975-1990 war and was re-established in 2003.

Attending the ceremony were a host of luminaries including Minister of Higher Education Hassan Diab, representing President Michel Suleiman and Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Deputy Ali Bazzi, representing Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri.

“The three honorands we celebrate today have each exerted a profound impact of their own,” said AUB President Peter Dorman, introducing the recipients. “It requires courage to follow one’s deepest convictions and it is this courage that we hope and desire our students—indeed all of our community members—to embrace.”

Dorman then introduced each recipient and conferred an honorary doctoral degree of humane letters. Each recipient then delivered a brief acceptance speech [attached].

Dorman also recognized three individuals who are leaving the University: outgoing Olayan School of Business Dean George Najjar, Vice President for Finance Steve Kenney, and Vice President for Human Resources Jim Radulski.

"With the generous support of the Olayan family and with unbounded vision, he has transformed a program formerly contained in Arts and Sciences into the foremost school of business in the Middle East, fully accredited and housed in a magnificent new home," Dorman said of Najjar. "Vice Presidents Kenney and Radulski have presided over two of the university's critical areas of administrative expertise, Finance and Human Resources. They have served this university with dedication, and with the primary goal of raising the bar for performance in financial accountability and transparency."

Following the conferring of honorary doctoral degrees, the 493 graduate students were given their master's degrees, MDs or PhDs. Unlike previous years, the Commencement exercises were split over two days, with graduates receiving their degrees on June 22, 2012 and undergraduates receiving theirs on June 23, 2012.

"The diplomas you are about to receive will do more than simply certify that you have completed a degree in the program of your choice," Dorman told the graduates. "Behind each diploma lie the history and stature of one of the greatest international universities in the world. Behind each diploma lie the universal values that are nurtured on this campus: diversity, freedom of thought, inclusiveness, and sustainability. Behind each diploma lie historic generations of men and women who have left their significant mark in the world, and whose ranks you are about to join."

Three graduate students then delivered speeches before their classmates: Hiba Krisht, majoring in philosophy; Souhad Abou Zaki, graduating from the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences; and Randa Akel, who studied medicine.

Krisht noted that her career as a student caused her to struggle to fight ignorance, while Abou Zaki quoted Socrates, "Be less concerned with what you have than with what you are; so that you may make yourselves as excellent as possible."

As for Akel, she described how studying for her medical degree challenged her to push herself beyond her comfort zone and to question herself while seeking knowledge, developing skills, building compassion and friendships.

In her keynote address to graduates, Shalala lauded the University as "the most important university in the Middle East and one of the great world universities."

She added, "It is not possible to go anywhere on this earth without meeting a proud AUB graduate. They are leaders in politics, healthcare, business, government and education."

Describing AUB as a resilient university which cannot be snuffed despite the wars and challenges it has had to face, Shalala invited graduating students to "carry forward the spirit of AUB in whatever you do and wherever you go."

She also offered students three challenges involving the mind, body and spirit, inviting them never to stop learning, to take care of their health and to nourish their spirits with love, compassion, understanding and tolerance in order to build great nations.

In conclusion, Shalala wished students “the best of everything – and that all your dreams come true. I wish you compassion, sacrifice and endurance. I wish you good health, great friendships, and love. I wish you comfortable but exciting lives,” she told them.

At the end of the two ceremonies, the graduates performed an impromptu dance to music by Pink Floyd, Mashrou’ Leila, and Queen.

Attached are the full speeches of the honorary degree recipients, the keynote speech, and the student speakers.

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor’s, master’s, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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